



# Fraud Newsletter

September 2007

*Sheriff Steve Mansfield*

## **Fraud and ID Theft Information – To Better Protect the Residents of Lewis County**

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*"If it's too good to be true  
it normally is"*

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**Fraud is simply a theft by trick. It can take the form of chain letters claiming huge amounts of cash to those who send money in or people claiming they will provide a service and never do.**

**Identity theft and identity fraud are terms used to refer to all types of crimes in which someone wrongfully obtains and uses another person's personal data in a way that involves fraud or deception for economic gain. This newsletter is intended to keep the public informed of the most recent fraud schemes happening in our county. It will also provide resources to help you take precautions to protect yourself from these vicious crimes.**

### **PROTECT YOUR ID**

- 1** Always know who you are providing personal information to
- 2** If you use passwords to access accounts make sure to change them often
- 3** Never provide personal information in response to any unsolicited offer
- 4** Know the company you are dealing with when making online purchases

## **Current Scams and Frauds Hitting Lewis County**

### **Nigerian Letter Scam**

**Again, this old scam is on the rise in Lewis County. Although this is one of the oldest scams making the rounds, it is one that costs victims hundreds of thousands of dollars each year. It always starts off as an unsolicited email or letter from a person claiming to be a wealthy foreigner who needs help moving millions of dollars from his homeland and promises a hefty percentage of this fortune as a reward for your assistance. A slightly different twist involves the same scam coming from someone claiming to work for an out of country bank. When you respond to the email you are then asked to provide personal and bank information. You never receive any money and the scammers use the information to steal your ID and empty your bank account. DO NOT RESPOND TO THE ORIGINAL SOLICITATION – THESE CROOKS ARE OUTSIDE THE US AND ARE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO CATCH.**

## How to Protect Yourself From Online Auction Scams

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*"Internet fraud is the fastest growing crime in the US"*

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**As our society turns more and more to the internet for the goods we need, there is an increase in thieves waiting to take your money. One area hit the hardest is online auctions. Here are a few tips to help you protect yourself in this area of bargains and great deals.**

### Avoiding Scams and Fraud

You can sidestep would-be scammers by following these common-sense rules:

- **DEAL LOCALLY WITH PEOPLE YOU CAN MEET IN PERSON** – Follow this simple rule and you will avoid 99% of the scams operating through auction sites.
- **NEVER WIRE FUNDS VIA WESTERN UNION, MONEYGRAM** or any other wire service as part of a transaction – this is the normal way for scammers to start the scam and steal your money.
- **FAKE CASHIER CHECKS & MONEY ORDERS ARE COMMON**, and **BANKS WILL CASH THEM AND THEN HOLD YOU RESPONSIBLE** when the forgery is discovered weeks later.
- **MOST ONLINE AUCTION SITES ARE NOT INVOLVED DIRECTLY IN ANY TRANSACTIONS**, and do not handle payments, guarantee transactions, provide escrow services, or offer "buyer protection" or "seller certification." It is up to the buyer to protect themselves from scams and thefts.
- **NEVER GIVE OUT FINANCIAL INFORMATION** (bank account number, social security number, eBay/PayPal info, etc.) when dealing with a seller on an auction site.
- **AVOID DEALS INVOLVING SHIPPING OR ESCROW SERVICES** and know that **ONLY A SCAMMER WILL "GUARANTEE" YOUR TRANSACTION.**
- **IF YOU ARE THE SELLER AVOID ANY DEAL INVOLVING OVER PAYMENT FOR YOUR ITEM** – Scammers will use an over payment as a means to get you to drop your guard.

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*"Vigilance is the only real protection against Internet fraud"*

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The internet is a powerful tool used by both legitimate businesses and scam artists alike. Always take steps to protect yourself and your personal information as you would protect your home or car.

### Who should I notify about a fraud or scam attempt?

- Federal Trade Commission toll free hotline: 877-FTC-HELP (877-382-4357)
- Federal Trade Commission on-line complaint form ([www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov))
- Internet Fraud Complaint Center ([www.ic3.gov/](http://www.ic3.gov/))
- Lewis County Sheriff's Office – 360-740-1329

### Other Resources

Phone Busters (Canadian Link) - <http://www.phonebusters.com/>

The Federal Citizen Information Center -  
<http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/scamsdesc.htm>

The Federal Trade Commission - <http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/>

The FBI Fraud Information page -  
<http://www.fbi.gov/majcases/fraud/fraudschemes.htm>

### Lewis County Sheriff's Office Mission Statement

To make a positive difference for members of our community by seeking and finding ways to affirmatively promote, preserve and deliver a feeling of security, safety and quality service.



**Sheriff Steve Mansfield**

*Committed to make a difference.*